The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism

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In this essay, I wish to reassess the juncture of cinema and modernism, and I will do so by moving from the example of early Soviet cinema to a seemingly less likely case, that of the classical Hollywood film. My inquiry is inspired by two complementary sets of questions: one pertaining to what cinema studies can contribute to our understanding of modernism and modernity; the other aimed at whether and how the perspective of modernist aesthetics may help us to elucidate and reframe the history and theory of cinema. The juncture of cinema and modernism has been explored in a number of ways, ranging from research on early cinema's interrelations with the industrial-technological modernity of the late nineteenth century, through an emphasis on the international art cinemas of both interwar and new wave periods, to speculations on the cinema's implication in the distinction between the modern and the postmodern. 1 My focus here will be more squarely on mid-twentieth-century modernity, roughly from the 1920s through the 1950s--the modernity of mass production, mass consumption, and mass annihilation--and the contemporaneity of a particular kind of cinema, mainstream Hollywood, with what has variously been labelled "high" or "hegemonic modernism."

Whether or not one agrees with the postmodernist challenge to modernism and modernity at large, it did open up a space for understanding modernism as a much wider, more diverse phenomenon, eluding any single-logic genealogy that [End Page 59] runs, say, from Cubism to Abstract Expressionism, from T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound,

James Joyce, and Franz Kafka to Samuel Beckett and Alain Robbe-Grillet, from

Arnold Schönberg to Karlheinz Stockhausen. For more than a decade now scholars have been dislodging that genealogy and delineating alternative forms of modernism, both in the West and in other parts of the world, that vary according to their social and geopolitical locations, often configured along the axis of post/coloniality, and according to the specific subcultural and indigenous traditions to which they responded. 2 In addition to opening up the modernist canon, these studies assume a notion of modernism that is

"more than a repertory of artistic styles," more than sets of ideas pursued by groups of artists and intellectuals. 3 Rather, modernism encompasses a whole range of cultural and artistic practices that register, respond to, and reflect upon processes of modernization and the experience of modernity, including a paradigmatic transformation of the conditions under which art is produced, transmitted, and consumed. In other words, just as modernist aesthetics are not reducible to the category of style, they tend to blur the boundaries of the institution of art in its traditional, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century incarnation that turns on the ideal of aesthetic autonomy and the distinction of "high" vs. "low," of autonomous art vs. popular and mass culture. 4

Focusing on the nexus between modernism and modernity, then, also implies a wider notion of the aesthetic, one that situates artistic practices within a larger history and economy of sensory perception that Walter Benjamin for one saw as the decisive battleground for the meaning and fate of modernity. 5 While the spread of urbanindustrial technology, the large-scale disembedding of social (and gender) relations, and the shift to mass consumption entailed processes of real destruction and loss, there also

emerged new modes of organizing vision and sensory perception, a new relationship with "things," different forms of mimetic experience and expression, of affectivity, temporality, and reflexivity, a changing fabric of everyday life, sociability, and leisure.

From this perspective, I take the study of modernist aesthetics to encompass cultural practices that both articulated and mediated the experience of modernity, such as the mass-produced and mass-consumed phenomena of fashion, design, advertising, architecture and urban environment, of photography, radio, and cinema. I am referring to this kind of modernism as "vernacular" (and avoiding the ideologically overdetermined term "popular")

because the term vernacular combines the dimension of the quotidian, of everyday usage, with connotations of discourse, idiom, and dialect, with circulation, promiscuity, and translatability. In the latter sense, finally, this essay will also address the vexed issue of Americanism, the question of why and how an aesthetic idiom developed in one country could achieve transnational and global currency, and how this account might add to and modify our understanding of classical cinema. I begin with an example that takes us back to one standard paradigm of twentiethcentury modernism: Soviet cinema and the context of Soviet avant-garde aesthetics. At the 1996 festival of silent film in Pordenone, the featured program was a selection of early Soviet films made between 1918-1924, that is, before the great era [End Page 60] of montage cinema, before the canonical works of Sergei Eisenstein, V. I. Pudovkin, Dziga Vertov, and Alexandr Dovzhenko. The question that guided the viewing of these films was, of course, how Russian cinema got from the Old to the New within a rather short span of time; how the sophisticated mise-en-scene cinema of the Czarist era, epitomized by the work of Yevgenij Bauer, was displaced by Soviet montage aesthetics.

Many of the films shown confirmed what film historians, following Lev Kuleshov, had vaguely assumed before: that this transformation was mediated, to a significant degree, by the impact of Hollywood. American films began to dominate Russian screens as early as 1915 and by 1916 had become the main foreign import. Films made during the years following 1917, even as they stage revolutionary plots for "agit" purposes, may display interesting thematic continuities with Czarist cinema (in particular a strong critique of patriarchy) and still contain amazing compositions in depth. 6 Increasingly, however, the mise-en-scene is broken down according to classical American principles of continuity editing, spatio-temporal coherence, and narrative causality. A famous case in point is Kuleshov's 1918 directorial debut, Engineer Prait's Project, a film that employed Hollywood-style continuity guidelines in a polemical break with the slow pace of Russian "quality pictures." 7 But the "American accent" in Soviet film--a faster cutting rate, closer framing, and the breakdown of diegetic space-- was more pervasive and can be found as well, in varying degrees of consistency, in the work of other directors (Vladimir Gardin, Ceslav Sabinskij, Ivan Perestiani). Hyperbolically speaking, one might say that Russian cinema became

Soviet cinema by going through a process of Americanization.

To be sure, Soviet montage aesthetics did not emerge fullblown from the encounter with Hollywood-style continuity editing; it is unthinkable without the new avant-garde movements in art and theater, without Constructivism, Suprematism, Productivism, Futurism--unthinkable without a politics of radical transformation. Nor was continuity editing perceived as neutral, as simply the most "efficient" way of telling a story. It was part and parcel of the complex of "Americanism" (or, as Kuleshov referred to it, "Americanitis") that catalyzed debates on modernity and modernist movements in Russia as it did in other countries. 8 As elsewhere, the enthusiasm for things American, tempered by a critique of capitalism, took on a variety of meanings, forms, and functions. Discussing the impact of American on Soviet cinema, Yuri Tsivian distinguishes between two kinds of Americanism: one, stylistic borrowings of the classical kind described above ("American montage," "American foreground"), and two, a fascination with the "lower genres," with adventure serials, detective thrillers, and slapstick comedies that, Tsivian argues, were actually more influential during the transitional years. If the former kind of Americanism aspired to formal standards of narrative efficiency, coherence, and motivation, the latter was concerned with external appearance, the sensual, material surface of American films; their use of exterior locations; their focus on action and thrills, physical stunts and attractions; their tempo, directness, and flatness; their eccentricity and excess of situations over plot. 9 [End Page 61]

Tsivian analyzes the Americanism of the "lower" genres as an intellectual fashion or taste. Discerning "something of a slumming mentality" in Eisenstein's or FEKS' fascination with "serial queen" melodramas, he situates the preference of Soviet filmmakers for "cinematic pulp fiction" (Victor Shklovsky) in the context of the leftist avant-garde's attack on high art, cultural pretensions, and western ideals of naturalism ("BON," 43). 10 What interests me in this account is less the intellectual and artistic intertext than the connection it suggests, across the distinction, between the two faces of American cinema: the classical norm, as an emergent form that was to dominate domestic as well as foreign markets for decades to come, and the seemingly nonclassical, or less classical, undercurrent of genres that thrive on something other than or, at the very least, oblique to the classical norm. What also interests me in the dynamics of Americanism and

Soviet film is the way they urge us to reconsider the
relationship between classical cinema and modernism, a relationship that within cinema studies has habitually been thought of as an opposition, as one of fundamentally incompatible registers.

The opposition between classicism and modernism has a venerable history in literature, art, and philosophy, with classicism linked to the model of tradition and modernism to the rhetoric of a break with precisely that tradition. 11 In that general sense, there would be no problem with importing this opposition into the field of cinema and film history, with classical cinema falling on the side of tradition and alternative film practices on the side of modernism. If, however, we consider the cinema as part of the historical formation of modernity, as a larger set of cultural and aesthetic, technological, economic, social, and political transformations, the opposition of classical cinema and modernism, the latter understood as a discourse articulating and responding to modernity, becomes a more complicated issue.

I am using "classical cinema" here as a technical term that has played a crucial part in the formation of cinema studies as an academic discipline. The term came to serve as a foundational concept in the analysis of the dominant form of narrative cinema, epitomized by Hollywood during the studio era. In that endeavor, "classical cinema" referred to roughly the same thing whether you were doing semiotics, psychoanalytic film theory, neoformalist poetics, or revisionist film history. This is not to say that it meant the same thing, and just a brief glimpse at its key moments will illustrate the transvaluations and disjunctures of the term.

Not coincidentally, the reference to Hollywood products as "classical" has a French pedigree. As early as 1926, Jean Renoir uses the phrase "cinematic classicism" (in this case referring to Charlie Chaplin and Ernst Lubitsch). 12 A more specific usage of the term occurs in Robert Brasillach and Maurice Bardèche's Histoire de cinéma, in particular in the second edition of 1943, revised with a collaborationist bent, where the authors refer to the style evolved in American sound film of 1933-1939 as the "classicism of the 'talkie.'" 13 After the Occupation, critics, notably André Bazin, began to speak of Hollywood filmmaking as "a classical art." By the 1950s, Bazin would celebrate John Ford's Stagecoach (1939) as "the ideal example of the maturity of a style brought to

classic perfection," comparing the film to "a wheel, [End Page 62] so perfectly made that it remains in equilibrium on its axis in any position." 14 This classical quality of American film, to quote Bazin's well-known statement, is due not to individual talent but to "the genius of the system, the richness of its ever-vigorous tradition, and its fertility when it comes into contact with new elements." 15

The first major transvaluation of the concept of classical cinema came with post-1968 film theory, in the all-round critique of ideology directed against the very system celebrated by Bazin. In this critique, formulated along Althusserian and Lacanian lines and from marxist and later feminist positions, classical Hollywood cinema was analyzed as a mode of representation that masks the process and fact of production, turns discourse into diegesis, history into story and myth; as an apparatus that sutures the subject in an illusory coherence and identity; and as a system of stylistic strategies that weld pleasure and meaning to reproduce dominant social and sexual hierarchies. 16 The notion of classical cinema elaborated in the pages of Cahiers du Cinéma, Cinéthique, Screen, Camera Obscura and elsewhere was less indebted to a neoclassicist ideal, as it still was for Bazin and Rohmer, than to the writings of Roland Barthes, in particular S/Z (1970), which attached the label of a "classic," "readerly," ostensibly transparent text to the nineteenth-century realist novel. 17

Another turn in the conception of classical cinema entails the rejection of any evaluative usage of the term, whether celebratory or critical, in favor of a more descriptive, presumably value-free and scientifically valid account. This project has found its most comprehensive realization to date in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson's monumental and impressive study, The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960 (1985). The authors conceive of classical cinema as an integral, coherent system, a system that interrelates a specific mode of production (based on Fordist principles of industrial organization) and a set of interdependent stylistic norms that were elaborated by 1917 and remained more or less in place until about 1960. The underlying notion of classical film style, rooted in neoformalist poetics and cognitive psychology, overlaps in part with the account of the classical paradigm in 1970s film theory, particularly with regard to principles of narrative dominance, linear and unobtrusive narration centering on the psychology and

agency of individual characters, and continuity editing. But where psychoanalytic-semiotic theorists pinpoint

unconscious mechanisms of identification and the ideological effects of "realism," Bordwell and Thompson stress thorough motivation and coherence of causality, space, and time; clarity and redundancy in guiding the viewer's mental operations; formal patterns of repetition and variation, rhyming, balance, and symmetry; and overall compositional unity and closure. 18 In Bordwell's formulation, "the principles which Hollywood claims as its own rely on notions of decorum, proportion, formal harmony, respect for tradition, mimesis, self-effacing craftsmanship, and cool control of the perceiver's response--canons which critics in any medium usually call 'classical'" (CHC, 3-4).

Such a definition is not just generally "classical" but more specifically recalls neoclassicist standards, from seventeenth-century neo-Aristotelian theories of drama to eighteenth-century ideals in music, architecture, and aesthetic theory. 19 (I do not [End Page 63] wish to equate eighteenth-century aesthetics at large with the neoclassicist tradition, nor with an ahistorical reduction to neoformalist principles; the eighteenth century was at least as much concerned with affect and effect, with theatricality and sensation, passion and sentiment, as with the balance of form and function.) As in literary and aesthetic antecedents that invoke classical antiquity as a model—recall Stendhal's definition of classicism as a style that "gives the greatest possible pleasure to an audience's ancestors" 20 --the temporal dynamics of the term classical as applied to the cinema is retrospective; the emphasis is on tradition and continuity rather than newness as difference, disruption, and change.

I can see a certain revisionist pleasure in asserting the power and persistence of classical standards in the face of a popular image of Hollywood as anything but decorous, harmonious, traditional, and cool. But how does this help us account for the appeal of films as diverse as Lonesome, Liberty, Freaks, Gold Diggers of 1933, Stella Dallas, Fallen Angel, Kiss Me Deadly, Bigger Than Life, Rock-a-Bye Baby (add your own examples)? And even if we succeeded in showing these films to be constructed on classical principles--which I'm sure can be done--what have we demonstrated? To repeat Rick Altman's question in an essay that challenges Bordwell, Thompson, and Staiger's model: "How classical was classical narrative?" 21 Attempts to answer that rhetorical question have focused

on what is left out, marginalized or repressed, in the totalizing account of classical cinema--in particular, the strong substratum of theatrical melodrama with its uses of spectacle and coincidence but also genres like comedy, horror, and pornography that involve the viewer's body and sensory-affective responses in ways that may not exactly conform to classical ideals. 22 Also minimized is the role of genre in general, specifically the affective-aesthetic division of labor among genres in structuring the consumption of Hollywood films. An even lesser role is granted to stars and stardom, which cannot be reduced to the narrative function of character and, like genre but even more so, involve the spheres of distribution, exhibition practices, and reception. The Classical Hollywood Cinema explicitly and, it should be said, with selfimposed consistency, brackets the history of reception and film culture--along with the cinema's interrelations with American culture at large.

It is not my intention to contest the achievement of Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson's work; the book does illuminate crucial aspects of how Hollywood cinema works and goes a long way toward accounting for the stability and persistence of this particular cultural form. My interest is rather in two questions that the book does not address, or addresses only to close off. One question pertains to the historicity of classical cinema, in particular its contemporaneity with twentieth-century modernisms and modern culture; the other question is to what extent and how the concept can be used to account for Hollywood's worldwide hegemony. To begin with, I am interested in the anachronism involved in asserting the priority of stylistic principles modelled on seventeenth- and eighteenthcentury neoclassicism. We are dealing with a cultural formation that was, after all, perceived as the incarnation of the modern, an aesthetic medium up-to-date with Fordist-Taylorist methods of industrial [End Page 64] production and mass consumption, with drastic changes in social, sexual, and gender relations, in the material fabric of everyday life, in the organization of sensory perception and experience. For contemporaries, Hollywood at its presumably most classical figured as the very symbol of contemporaneity, the present, modern times: "this our period," as Gertrude Stein famously put it, "was undoubtedly the period of the cinema and series production." 23

And it held that appeal not only for avant-garde artists and intellectuals in the United States and the modernizing capitals of the world (Berlin, Paris, Moscow,

Shanghai, Tokyo, Sao Paulo, Sydney, Bombay) but also for emerging mass publics both at home and abroad. Whatever the economic and ideological conditions of its hegemony--and I wish by no means to discount them--classical Hollywood cinema could be imagined as a cultural practice on a par with the experience of modernity, as an industrially-produced, mass-based, vernacular modernism.

In cinema studies, the juncture of the classical and the modern has, for the most part, been written as a bifurcated history. The critique of classical cinema in 1970s film theory took over a structuralist legacy of binarisms, such as Barthes's opposition between the "readerly" and "writerly," which translated into the binary conception of film practice as either "classical-idealist," that is, ideological, or "modernist-materialist," that is, selfreflexive and progressive. This is particularly the case for the theory and practice of "counter cinema" that David Rodowick has dubbed "political modernism"--from Jean-Luc

Godard and Peter Gidal through Noel Burch, Peter Wollen, Stephen Heath, Laura Mulvey and others--that owes much to the revival or belated reception of the 1920s and 1930s leftist avant-garde, notably Bertolt Brecht. 24 Moreover, the polarization of classical cinema and modernism seemed sufficiently warranted by skepticism vis-à-vis Hollywood's self-promotion as "international modern," considering how much the celebration of American cinema's contemporaneity, youth, vitality, and directness was part of the industry's own mythology deployed to legitimate cutthroat business practices and the relentless expansion of economic power worldwide.

While Bordwell and Thompson's neoformalist approach is to some extent indebted to the political-modernist tradition, The Classical Hollywood Cinema recasts the binarism of classicism and modernism in two ways. 25 At the level of industrial organization, the modernity of Hollywood's mode of production (Fordism) is subsumed under the goal of maintaining the stability of the system as a whole; thus major technological and economic changes, such as the transition to sound, are discussed in terms of a search for "functional equivalents" by which the institution ensures the overall continuity of the paradigm (CHC, 304). In a similar vein, any stylistic deviations of the modernist kind within classical cinema--whether imports from European avant-garde and art films, native films noir, or work of idiosyncratic auteurs like Orson Welles,

Alfred Hitchcock, and Otto Preminger--are cited as proof of the system's amazing appropriative flexibility: "So powerful is the classical paradigm that it regulates what may violate it" (CHC, 81). 26 [End Page 65]

To be sure, there is ample precedent outside film history for the assimilation of the modern to classical or neoclassicist standards; after all, art historians speak of "classical modernism" (Picasso, de Chirico, Leger, Picabia) and there were related tendencies in music (Reger, Stravinsky, Poulenc, de Faya, to name just a few). 27 In modern architecture (LeCorbusier, Gropius, the Bauhaus), we can see the wedding of machine aesthetics to a notion of presumably natural functions, and in literary modernism, we have self-proclaimed neoclassicists such as T. E. Hulme, Wyndham Lewis, Ernst Jünger, and Jean Cocteau. In the genealogy of film theory, one of the founding manifestos of classical cinema is Hugo Münsterberg's The Psychology of the Photoplay (1916), a treatise in neo-Kantian aesthetics applied to the cinema. Its author was actually better known for books on psychology and industrial efficiency that became standard works for modern advertising and management. Yet, these examples should be all the more reason for the historian to step back and consider the implications of these junctures that reveal themselves as increasingly less disjunctive with the passing of modernity, the disintegration of hegemonic or high modernism, and the emergence of alternative modernisms from the perspective of postmodernity.

A key problem seems to lie in the very concept of the "classical"--as a historical category that implies the transcendence of mere historicity, as a hegemonic form that claims transcultural appeal and universality. Already in its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century usages, the neoclassicist recourse to tradition, in whatever way it may misread or invent a prior original, does not take us through history, but instead to a transhistorical ideal, a timeless sense of beauty, proportion, harmony, and balance derived from nature. It is no coincidence that the neoformalist account of classical cinema is linked and elaborated in Bordwell's work to the project of grounding film studies in the framework of cognitive psychology. 28 The Classical Hollywood Cinema offers an impressive account of a particular historical formation of the institution of American cinema, tracking its emergence in terms of the evolution of film style (Thompson) and mode of production (Staiger). But once "the system" is in place (from about 1917 on), its ingenuity and stability are attributed to the optimal engagement of mental

structures and perceptual capacities that are, in Bordwell's words, "biologically hard-wired" and have been so for tens of thousands of years. 29 Classical narration ultimately amounts to a method of optimally guiding the viewer's attention and maximizing his or her response by way of more intricate plots and emotional tensions. The attempt to account for the efficacy of classical stylistic principles with recourse to cognitive psychology coincides with the effort to expand the reign of classical objectives to types of film practice outside Hollywood that had hitherto been perceived as alternative (most recently in Bordwell's work on Feuillade and other European traditions of staging-in-depth) as well as beyond the historical period demarcated in the book (that is, up to 1960). 30

How can we restore historical specificity to the concept of classical Hollywood cinema? How can we make the anachronistic tension in the combination of neoclassicist style and Fordist mass culture productive for an understanding of both classical [End Page 66]

Hollywood cinema and mass-mediated modernity? How do we distinguish, within the category of the classical, between natural norm, canonical cultural form, and a rhetorical strategy that perhaps enabled the articulation of something radically new and different under the guise of a continuity with tradition? Can there be an account of classicality that does not unwittingly reproduce, at the level of academic discourse, the universalist norms mobilized not least for purposes of profit, expansion, and ideological containment? Or wouldn't we do better to abandon the concept of classical cinema altogether and instead, as Philip Rosen and others have opted to do, use the more neutral term "mainstream cinema"? 31

For one thing, I don't think that the term "mainstream" is necessarily clearer, let alone neutral or innocent; in addition to the connotation of a quasi-natural flow, it suggests a homogeneity that locates side streams and countercurrents on the outside or margins rather than addressing the ways in which they at once become part of the institution and blur its boundaries. For another, I would argue that, for the time being, classical cinema is still a more precise term because it names a regime of productivity and intelligibility that is both historically and culturally specific, much as it gets passed off as timeless and natural (and the efforts to do so are part of its history). In that sense, however, I take the term to

refer less to a system of functionally interrelated norms and a corresponding set of empirical objects than to a scaffold, matrix, or web that allows for a wide range of aesthetic effects and experiences--that is, for cultural configurations that are more complex and dynamic than the most accurate account of their function within any single system may convey and that require more open-ended, promiscuous, and imaginative types of inquiry. 32

From this perspective, one might argue that it would be more appropriate to consider classical Hollywood cinema within the framework of "American national cinema." Such a reframing would allow us, among other things, to include independent film practices outside and against the pull of Hollywood, such as "race films," regional, subcultural, and avant-garde film practices. While this strategy is important, especially for teaching American cinema, the issue of Hollywood's role in defining and negotiating American nationality strikes me as more complicated. If we wish to "provincialize Hollywood," to invoke Dipesh Chakrabarty's injunction to "provincialize" European accounts of modernity, it is not enough to consider American cinema on a par with any other national cinema--inasmuch as that very category in many cases describes defensive formations shaped in competition with and resistance to Hollywood products. 33

In other words, the issue of classicality is bound up with the question of what constituted the hegemony of American movies worldwide and what assured them the historic impact they had, for better or for worse, within a wide range of different local contexts and diverse national cinemas.

The question of what constitutes Hollywood's power on a global scale returns us to the phenomenon of Americanism discussed earlier in connection with Soviet film. I am concerned with Americanism here less as a question of exceptionalism, consensus ideology, or crude economic power, though none of these aspects can be ignored, than as a practice of cultural circulation and hegemony. Victoria de Grazia [End Page 67] has argued that Americanism still awaits analysis, beyond the polarized labels of,

respectively, cultural imperialism and a worldwide spreading of the American Dream, as "the historical process by which the American experience was transformed into a universal model of business society based on advanced technology and promising formal equality and unlimited mass consumption." 34 However ideological these promises may, or may not, turn out to be, de Grazia

observes that, unlike earlier imperial practices of colonial dumping, American cultural exports "were designed to go as far as the market would take them, starting at home." In other words, "cultural exports shared the basic features of American mass culture, intending by that term not only the cultural artifacts and associated forms, but also the civic values and social relations of the first capitalist mass society." 35

Regarding classical cinema, one could take this argument to suggest that the hegemonic mechanisms by which Hollywood succeeded in amalgamating a diversity of competing traditions, discourses, and interests on the domestic level may have accounted for at least some of the generalized appeal and robustness of Hollywood products abroad (a success in which the diasporic, relatively cosmopolitan profile of the Hollywood community no doubt played a part as well). In other words, by forging a mass market out of an ethnically and culturally heterogeneous society, if often at the expense of racial

others, American classical cinema had developed an idiom, or idioms, that traveled more easily than its national-popular rivals. I do not wish to resuscitate the myth of film as a new "universal language" whose early promoters included D. W. Griffith and Carl Laemmle, founder of the Universal Film Company, nor do I mean to gloss over the business practices by which the American film industry secured the dominance of its products on foreign markets, in particular through control of distribution and exhibition venues. 36 But I do think that, whether we like it or not, American movies of the classical

period offered something like the first global vernacular. If this vernacular had a transnational and translatable resonance, it was not just because of its optimal mobilization of biologically hardwired structures and universal narrative templates but, more important, because it played a key role in mediating competing cultural discourses on modernity and modernization, because it articulated, multiplied, and globalized a particular historical experience.

If classical Hollywood cinema succeeded as an international modernist idiom on a mass basis, it did so not because of its presumably universal narrative form but because it meant different things to different people and publics, both at home and abroad. We must not forget that these films, along with other mass-cultural exports, were consumed in locally quite specific, and unequally developed, contexts and conditions of reception; that they not only had a levelling impact on

indigenous cultures but also challenged prevailing social and sexual arrangements and advanced new possibilities of social identity and cultural styles; and that the films were also changed in that process. Many films were literally changed, both for particular export markets (e.g., the conversion of American happy endings into tragic endings for Russian release) and by censorship, marketing, and programming practices in the countries [End Page 68] in which they were distributed, not to mention practices of dubbing and subtitling. 37 As systematic as the effort to conquer foreign markets undoubtedly was, the actual reception of Hollywood films was likely a much more haphazard and eclectic process depending on a

variety of factors. 38 How were the films programmed in the context of local film cultures, in particular conventions of exhibition and reception? Which genres were preferred in which places (for instance, slapstick in European and African countries, musical and historical costume dramas in India), and how were American genres dissolved and assimilated into different generic traditions, different concepts of genre? And how did American imports figure within the public horizon of reception that might have included both indigenous products and films from other foreign countries? To write the international history of classical American cinema, therefore, is a matter of tracing not just its mechanisms of standardization and hegemony but also the diversity of ways in which this cinema was translated and reconfigured in both local and translocal contexts of reception.

Americanism, notwithstanding Antonio Gramsci (as well as recent critiques of Gramsci and left Fordism), cannot simply be reduced to a regime of mechanized production, an ideological veneer for discipline, abstraction, reification, for new hierarchies and routes of power. Nor can it be reduced to the machine aesthetics of intellectual and high modernism. 39 We cannot understand the appeal of Americanism unless we take seriously the promises of mass consumption and the dreams of a mass culture often in excess of and in conflict with the regime of production that spawned that mass culture (a phenomenon that has been dubbed "Americanization from below"). 40 In other words, we have to understand the material, sensory conditions under which American mass culture, including Hollywood, was received and could have functioned as a powerful matrix for modernity's liberatory impulses--its moments of abundance,

play, and radical possibility, its glimpses of collectivity and gender equality (the latter signalled by its opponents' excoriation of Americanism as a "new matriarchy"). 41

The juncture of classical cinema and modernity reminds us, finally, that the cinema was not only part and symptom of modernity's experience and perception of crisis and upheaval; it was also, most importantly, the single most inclusive cultural horizon in which the traumatic effects of modernity were reflected, rejected or disavowed, transmuted or negotiated. That the cinema was capable of a reflexive relation with modernity and modernization was registered by contemporaries early on, and I read

Benjamin's and Siegfried Kracauer's writings of the 1920s and 1930s as, among other things, an effort to theorize this relation as a new mode of reflexivity. 42 Neither simply a medium for realistic representation (in the sense of marxist notions of reflection or Widerspiegelung), nor particularly concerned with formalist self-reflexivity, commercial cinema appeared to realize Johann Gottlieb Fichte's troping of reflection as "seeing with an added eye" in an almost literal sense, and it did so not just on the level of individual, philosophical cognition but on a mass scale. 43 I am also drawing on more recent sociological debates on "reflexive modernization" (Ulrich [End Page 69] Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash), a concept deployed to distinguish the risk-conscious phase of current post- or second modernity from a presumably more single-minded, orthodox, and simple first modernity. However, I would argue (although I cannot do so in detail here) that modernization inevitably provokes the need for reflexivity and that, if sociologists considered the cinema in aesthetic and sensorial terms rather than as just another medium of information and communication, they would find ample evidence in both American and other cinemas of the interwar period of an at once modernist and vernacular reflexivity. 44

This dimension of reflexivity is key to the claim that the cinema not only represented a specifically modern type of public sphere, the public here understood as a "social horizon of experience," but also that this new mass public could have functioned as a discursive form in which individual experience could be articulated and find recognition by both subjects and others, including strangers. 45 Kracauer, in his more utopian moments, understood the cinema as an alternative public sphere--alternative to both bourgeois institutions of art,

education, and culture, and the traditional arenas of politics—an imaginative horizon in which, however compromised by its capitalist foundations, something like an actual democratization of culture seemed to be taking shape, in his words, a "self-representation of the masses subject to the process of mechanization." 46 The cinema suggested this possibility not only because it attracted and made visible to itself and society an emerging, heterogeneous mass public ignored and despised by dominant culture. The new medium also offered an alternative because it engaged the contradictions of modernity at the level of the senses, the level at which the impact of modern technology on human experience was most palpable and irreversible. In other words, the cinema not only traded in the mass production of the senses but also provided an aesthetic horizon for the experience of industrial mass society.

While Kracauer's observations were based on moviegoing in Weimar Germany, he attributed this sensory reflexivity more often than not to American film, in particular slapstick comedy with its well-choreographed orgies of demolition and clashes between people and things. The logic he discerned in slapstick films pointed up a disjuncture within Fordist mass culture, the possibility of an anarchic supplement generated on the same principles: "One has to hand this to the Americans: with slapstick films they have created a form that offers a counterweight to their reality. If in that reality they subject the world to an often unbearable discipline, the film in turn dismantles this self-imposed order quite forcefully." 47 The reflexive potential of slapstick comedy can be, and has been, argued on a number of counts, at the levels of plot, performance, and mise-enscene, and depending on the particular inflection of the genre. In addition to articulating and playing games with the violence of technological regimes, mechanization and clock time, slapstick films also specialized in deflating the terror of consumption, of a new culture of status and distinction. 48 Likewise, the genre was a vital site for engaging the conflicts and pressures of a multiethnic society (think of the many Jewish performers who thematized the discrepancies [End Page 70] between diasporic identity and upward mobility, from Larry Semon through Max Davidson and George Sydney). And, not least, slapstick comedy allowed for a playful and physical expression of anxieties over changed gender roles and new forms of sexuality and intimacy.

But what about other genres? And what about popular narrative films that conform more closely to classical norms? Once we begin looking at Hollywood films as both a provincial response to modernization and a vernacular for different, diverse, yet also comparable experiences, we may find that genres such as the musical, horror, or melodrama may offer just as much reflexive potential as slapstick comedy, with appeals specific to those genres and specific resonances in different contexts of reception. This is to suggest that reflexivity can take different forms and different affective directions, both in individual films and directorial oeuvres and in the aesthetic division of labor among Hollywood genres, and that reflexivity does not always have to be critical or unequivocal. On the contrary, the reflexive dimension of these films may consist precisely in the ways in which they allow their viewers to confront the constitutive ambivalence of modernity. The reflexive dimension of Hollywood films in relation to modernity may take cognitive, discursive, and narrativized forms, but it is crucially anchored in sensory experience and sensational affect, in processes of mimetic identification that are more often than not partial and excessive in relation to narrative comprehension. Benjamin, writing about the eliminateon of distance in the new perceptual regimes of advertising and cinema, sees in the giant billboards that present things in new proportions and colors a backdrop for a "sentimentality . . . restored to health and liberated in American style," just as in the cinema "people whom nothing moves or touches any longer learn to cry again." 49 The reason slapstick comedy hit home and flourished worldwide was not critical reason but the films' propulsion of their viewers' bodies into laughter. And adventure serials succeeded because they conveyed a new immediacy, energy, and sexual economy, not only in Soviet Russia and not only among avant-garde intellectuals. Again and again, writings on the American cinema of the interwar period stress the new physicality, the exterior surface or "outer skin" of things (Antonin Artaud), the material presence of the quotidian, as Louis Aragon put it, "really common objects, everything that celebrates life, not some artificial convention that excludes corned beef and tins of polish." 50 I take such statements to suggest that the reflexive, modernist dimension of American cinema does not necessarily require that we demonstrate a cognitive, compensatory, or therapeutic function in relation to the experience of modernity but that, in a very basic sense, even the most ordinary commercial

films were involved in producing a new sensory culture.

Hollywood did not just circulate images and sounds; it produced and globalized a new sensorium; it constituted, or tried to constitute, new subjectivities and subjects. The mass appeal of these films resided as much in their ability to engage viewers at the narrative-cognitive level or in their providing models of identification for being modern as it did in the register of what Benjamin troped as the "optical unconscious." 51 [End Page 71] It was not just what these films showed, what they brought into optical consciousness, as it were, but the way they opened up hitherto unperceived modes of sensory perception and experience, their ability to suggest a different organization of the daily world. Whether this new visuality took the shape of dreams or of nightmares, it marked an aesthetic mode that was decidedly not classical--at least not if we literalize that term and reduce it to neoclassicist formal and stylistic principles. Yet, if we understand the classical in American cinema as a metaphor of a global sensory vernacular rather than a universal narrative idiom, then it might be possible to imagine the two Americanisms operating in the development of Soviet cinema-- the modernist fascination with the "low," sensational, attractionist genres and the classicist ideal of formal and narrative efficiency--as two vectors of the same phenomenon, both contributing to the hegemony of Hollywood film. This may well be a fantasy: the fantasy of a cinema that could help its viewers negotiate the tension between reification and the aesthetic, strongly understood, the possibilities, anxieties, and costs of an expanded

sensory and experiential horizon--the fantasy, in other words, of a mass-mediated public sphere capable of responding to modernity and its failed promises. Now that postmodern media culture is busy recycling the ruins of both classical cinema and modernity, we may be in a better position to see the residues of a dreamworld of mass culture that is no longer ours--and yet to some extent still is.

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Notes

1. See, for instance, Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds., Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); John Orr, Cinema and Modernity (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); and Anne Friedberg, Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

In addition, of course, there have been numerous studies on the impact of cinema on experimentation in other media, especially fiction, painting, and theater.

2. See, for instance, Marshall Berman, All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); Andreas Huyssen, After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Peter Wollen, "Out of the Past: Fashion/Orientalism/The Body" (1987), in Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Richard Taruskin, "A Myth of the Twentieth Century: The Rite of Spring, the Tradition of the New, and 'Music Itself,'" Modernism/Modernity 2, no. 1 (January 1995): 1-26; Rosalind Krauss, The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985); Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in Pollock, Vision and Difference (London: Routledge, 1988), 50-90; Molly Nesbit, "The Rat's Ass," October 56 (spring 1991): 6-20; Matthew Teitelbaum, ed., Montage and Modern Life 1919-

1942 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992); Houston A. Baker, Jr., Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Michael North, The Dialect of Modernism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (New York: Routledge, 1994), ch. 12; Tejaswini Niranjana, P. Sudhir, Vivek Dhareshwar, eds., Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1993); Arjun Appadurai, Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Néstor García Canclini, "Latin American Contradictions: Modernism without Modernization?" in
Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity, trans. C. L. Chiappari and S. L. Lopez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 41-65; and Sharan A. Minichiello, ed., Japan's Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy 1900-1930 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998).
3. Lawrence Rainey and Robert von Hallberg, "Editorial/Introduction," Modernism/Modernity 1, no. 1 (January 1994): 1.
4. Peter Bürger, following Adorno, asserts that the very category of "style" is rendered problematic by the advanced commodification of art in the twentieth century and considers the refusal to develop a coherent style (as in dada and surrealism) a salient feature of avant-gardist, as distinct from modernist, aesthetics; see Bürger, Theory of the Avant-Garde, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), esp. ch. 2, "The Historicity of Aesthetic Categories." The opening up of both
modernist and avant-garde canons, however, shows a great overlap between the two, just as the effort on the part of particular modernist artists and movements to restore the institutional status of art may well go along with avant-gardist modes of behavior and publicity; see my Ezra Pounds frühe Poetik zwischen Aufklärung und Avantgarde (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979). See also Huyssen, After the Great Divide, esp. ch. 2, "Adorno in Reverse: From Hollywood to Richard Wagner."
5. In the second version of his famous essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935), Benjamin wrote of the "the theory [die Lehre] of perception that the Greeks called aesthetics" (Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Rolf

Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser [Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1989], 7:381; my translation). He conceived of the politics of this essay very much as an effort to confront the aesthetic tradition narrowly understood, in particular the persistence of aestheticism in contemporary literature and art, with the changes wrought upon the human sensorium by industrial and military technology. See Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," October 62 (fall 1992): 3-41; see also my "Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street," Critical Inquiry 25, no. 2 (winter 1999): 306-43.

6. On the cinema of the Czarist period, see Yuri Tsivian, "Some Preparatory Remarks on Russian Cinema," in Testimoni silenziosi: Filmi russi 1908-1919/Silent Witnesses: Russian Films 1908-1919, ed. Paolo Cherchi Usai et al. (Pordenone, London: British Film Institute, 1989); idem, Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception (1991), trans. Alan Bodger (1994; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); also see the contributions of Paolo Cherchi Usai, Mary Ann Doane, Heide Schlüpmann, and myself to two special issues of the journal Cinefocus 2, no. 1 (fall 1991) and 2, no. 2 (spring 1992).

7. See Yuri Tsivian, "Between the Old and the New: Soviet Film Culture in 1918-1924," Griffithiana 55/56 (1996): 15-63; hereafter abbreviated "BON"; idem, "Cutting and Framing in Bauer's and Kuleshov's Films," Kintop: Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films 1 (1992): 103-13; and Kristin Thompson, David Bordwell, Film History: An Introduction (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 130.

8. See, for instance, The Weimar Republic Sourcebook, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), section 15; and Antonio Gramsci's famous essay, "Americanism and Fordism," in Selections from the Prison Notebooks [1929-1935], ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 277-318. See also Mary Nolan, Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Thomas J. Saunders, Hollywood in Berlin: American Cinema and Weimar Germany (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), esp. chs. 4 and 5; Alf Lüdtke, Inge Marßolek, Adelheid von Saldern, eds., Amerikanisierung: Traum und Alptraum im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996); and Jean-Louis Cohen and Humbert Damisch,

eds., Américanisme et modernité: L'idéal américain dans l'architecture (Paris: EHESS, Flammarion, 1993).

9. See "BON," 39-45.

10. A related recruiting of "low" popular culture for the programmatic attack on the institution of art can be found in western European avant-garde movements, in particular dada and surrealism.

11. See Robert B. Pippin, Modernism as a Philosophical Problem (London: Blackwell, 1991), 4.

12. See Thomas Elsaesser, "What Makes Hollywood Run?" American Film 10, no. 7
(May 1985): 52-5, 68; Renoir quoted on 52.

13. Robert Brasillach and Maurice Bardèche, Histoire du cinéma, 2nd ed. (Paris: Denoël, 1943), 369, quoted in David Bordwell, On the History of Film Style (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 47. With regard to the earlier edition (1935), which bestows the term "classic" on international silent film of the period 1924-1929, Bordwell remarks that the invocation of the term recalls "the common art-historical conception of classicism as a dynamic stability in which innovations submit to an overall balance of form and function" (40). On the political stance of the authors, in particular Brasillach,
see Alice Kaplan, Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Intellectual Life (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), chs. 6 and 7, and Bordwell, ibid., 38-41.

14. André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Western," in What Is Cinema? sel. and ed. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 2:149. In "The Western: Or the American Film Par Excellence," Bazin invokes Corneille to describe the "simplicity" of western scripts as a quality that both lends them "naive greatness" and makes them a subject for parody (2:147). Also see Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," in What Is Cinema? 1:29. Dudley Andrew has drawn my attention to Eric Rohmer who during the same period developed a notion of cinematic classicism that more broadly linked "modern" cinema to the eighteenth-century tradition. See Rohmer, Le Gout de la beauté, ed. Jean Narboni (Paris: Editions de l'Etoile, 1984), esp. "L'Age classique de cinéma," 25-99; see also Bordwell, History of Film Style, 77.

15. André Bazin, "La Politique des auteurs," in The New Wave, ed. Peter Graham

(New York: Doubleday, 1968), 143, 154.

16. See, for example, Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," in Screen Reader 1 (London: SEFT, 1977); Janet Bergstrom, "Enunciation and Sexual Difference (Part I)," Camera Obscura 3-4 (1979);

as well as writings by Comolli, Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz, Raymond Bellour,

Stephen Heath, Laura Mulvey, and Colin MacCabe in Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A

Film Theory Reader, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

17. See Judith Mayne, "S/Z and Film Theory," Jump Cut 12-13 (December 1976): 41-5. A notable exception to this tendency is Raymond Bellour who stresses the formal and stylistic principles at work in classical cinema (patterns of repetition-resolution, rhyming, symmetry, redundancy, interlacing of micro- and macrostructures) by which classical films produce their conscious and unconscious meanings and effects. See Bellour, L'Analyse du Film (Paris: Editions Albatros, 1979), which includes the texts translated as "Segmenting/Analyzing" and "The Obvious and the Code," in Narrative, Apparatus,

Ideology, 66-92, 93-101.

18. See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, Kristin Thompson, The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); hereafter abbreviated CHC. In The Classical Hollywood Cinema, "realism" is equated with verisimilitude and, as such, figures as one of four types of narrative motivation--compositional, realistic, intertextual, artistic (CHC, 19). While this qualification seems appropriate vis-à-vis the diversity of Hollywood genres (think of the

musical, for instance), it does not make the issue of cinematic "realism" go away, whether as rhetorical claim, ideological fiction, or aesthetic possibility. In this context, see Christine Gledhill's interesting attempt to understand "realism" as American cinema's way of facilitating the "modernization of melodrama" (Gledhill, "Between Melodrama and Realism: Anthony Asquith's Underground and King Vidor's The Crowd," in Classical Hollywood Narrative: The Paradigm

Wars, ed. Jane Gaines [Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992], 131).

19. See Rick Altman, "Dickens, Griffith, and Film Theory Today," in Classical Hollywood Narrative, 15-17, discusses the problematic relationship of Bordwell's concept of cinematic classicism with its French literary antecedents.

20. Stendhal, quoted in CHC, 367-8.

21. Altman, "Dickens, Griffith, and Film Theory Today," 14.

22. The debate on melodrama in cinema studies is extensive; for an exemplary collection see Christine Gledhill, ed., Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film (London: British Film Institute, 1987), especially Gledhill's introduction, "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation," 5-39; Gledhill, "Between Melodrama and Realism: Anthony Asquith's Underground and King Vidor's The Crowd, " in Classical Hollywood Narrative; and Linda Williams, "Melodrama Revised," in Refiguring American Film Genres: Theory and History, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). On genres that involve the body in nonclassical ways, see Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," Film Quarterly 44, no. 4 (summer 1991): 2-13. On the mutually competing aesthetics of slapstick comedy, see Donald Crafton, "Pie and Chase: Gag, Spectacle and Narrative in Slapstick Comedy," in Classical Hollywood Comedy, ed. Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry Jenkins (New York: Routledge, 1994), 106-119; see also William Paul, Laughing Screaming: Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

23. Gertrude Stein, "Portraits and Repetition," in Lectures in America (New York: Random House, 1935), 177. For a critical account of the industrial, political, and cultural dimensions of Fordism, see Terry Smith, Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

24. See D. N. Rodowick, The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); see also Sylvia Harvey, May '68 and Film Culture (London: British Film Institute, 1978), ch. 2; and Martin Walsh, The Brechtian Aspects of Radical Cinema, ed. Keith M. Griffiths (London: British Film Institute, 1981). For an example of the binary construction of this approach, see Peter Wollen, "Godard and Counter-Cinema: Vent d'est " (1972), in Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology, 120-9.

25. See, for instance, Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, "Space and Narrative in the Films of Ozu," Screen 17, no. 2 (summer 1976): 41-73; Thompson, Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), part 6; and Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), ch. 12.

26. Such statements bear an uncanny similarity with Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's analysis of the "Culture Industry" as an all-absorbing totality in Dialectic of Enlightenment (1944/47), though obviously without the despair and pessimism that prompted that analysis.

27. The Basel Kunstmuseum mounted an impressive exhibition of classicist modernism in music and the arts; see the catalogue, Canto d'Amore: Klassizistische Moderne in Musik und bildernder Kunst 1914-1935, ed. Gottfried Boehm, Ulrich Mosch, and Katharina Schmidt (Basel: Kunstmuseum, 1996); and the collection of essays and sources accompanying the concurrent concert series, Klassizistische Moderne, ed. Felix Meyer (Winterthur: Amadeus Verlag, 1996).

28. See CHC, 7-9, 58-9; Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film, ch. 3 and passim; and idem, "A Case for Cognitivism," Iris 5, no. 2 (1989): 11-40. See also Dudley Andrew's introduction to this issue of Iris, devoted to "Cinema and Cognitive Psychology," 1-10; and the continuation of the debate between Bordwell and Andrew in Iris 6, no. 2 (summer 1990): 107-16. In the effort to make cognitivism a central paradigm in film studies, Bordwell is joined by, among others, Noël Carroll; see Bordwell and Carroll,
eds., Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 37-70; and Carroll, Theorizing the Moving Image (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

29. Bordwell, "La Nouvelle Mission de Feuillade; or, What Was Mise-en-Scène?," The Velvet Light Trap 37 (spring 1996): 23; see also idem, On the History of Film Style, 142; and idem, "Convention, Construction, and Cinematic Vision," in Post-Theory, 87-107.

30. See Bordwell, "La Nouvelle Mission de Feuillade"; On the History of Film Style, ch. 6; and Classical Hollywood Cinema, ch. 30. Kristin Thompson's new study is concerned with the persistence of classical principles past 1960, see her "Storytelling in the New Hollywood: The Case of Groundhog Day," paper presented at the Chicago Film Seminar, 3 October 1996.

31. Rosen, Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology, 8.

32. Patrice Petro, drawing on the work of Karsten Witte and Eric Rentschler, contrasts this centrifugal quality of Hollywood cinema with the literalization of classical norms in Nazi cinema: "The Nazi cinema [in its strategies of visual enticement and simultaneous narrative containment] represents the theory (of classical Hollywood narrative) put into practice rather than the practice (of Hollywood filmmaking) put into theory" (Petro, "Nazi Cinema at the Intersection of the Classical and the Popular," New German Critique 74 [spring-summer 1998]: 54).

33. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?" Representations 37 (winter 1992): 20.

34. Victoria de Grazia, "Americanism for Export," Wedge 7-8 (winter-spring 1985): 73. See also de Grazia, "Mass Culture and Sovereignty: The American Challenge to European Cinemas, 1920-1960," Journal of Modern History 61, no. 1 (March 1989): 53- 87.

35. De Grazia, "Americanism for Export," 77. Mica Nava, "The Cosmopolitanism of Commerce and the Allure of Difference: Selfridges, the Russian Ballet and the Tango 1911-1914," International Journal of Cultural Studies 1, no. 2 (August 1998): 163-96, argues for a similar distinction, that is, between a commercial culture of cosmopolitan modernism shaped in the United States and the cultural imperialism of colonial regimes.

36. On the role of foreign markets for the American film industry, see Kristin Thompson, Exporting Entertainment (London: British Film Institute, 1985); Ian Jarvie, Hollywood's Overseas Campaign: The North Atlantic Movie Trade, 1920-1950 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); David W. Ellwood and Rob Kroes, eds., Hollywood in Europe: Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994); and Ruth Vasey, The World According to Hollywood, 1918-1939 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997). On the celebration of film as a new "universal language" during the 1910s, see my Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 76-81, 183-7.

37. On the practice of converting happy endings of American films into "Russian endings," see Yuri Tsivian, "Some Preparatory Remarks on Russian Cinema," Silent Witnesses, 24; see also Mary Ann Doane, "Melodrama, Temporality,

Recognition: American and Russian Silent Cinema," Cinefocus 2, no. 1 (fall 1991): 13-26.

38. See, for instance, Rosie Thomas, "Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity,"Screen 26, no. 1 (January-February 1985): 116-31; Sara Dickey, Cinema and the Urban Poor in South India (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Stephen Putnam Hughes, "'Is There Anyone out There?': Exhibition and the Formation of Silent Film Audiences in South India," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1996; Onookome Okome and Jonathan Haynes, Cinema and Social Change in West Africa (Jos, Nigeria: Nigerian Film Corporation, 1995), ch. 6; see also Hamid Naficy, "Theorizing 'Third World' Film Spectatorship," Wide Angle 18, no. 4 (October 1996): 3-26.

39. For an example of such a critique, see Peter Wollen, "Modern Times: Cinema/Americanism/The Robot" (1988), in Raiding the Icebox, 35-71.

40. The phrase "Americanization from below" is used by Kaspar Maase in his study of West-German youth culture of the 1950s, BRAVO Amerika: Erkundungen zur Jugendkultur der Bundesrepublik in den fünfziger Jahren (Hamburg: Junius, 1992), 19.

41. On the different economy of gender relations connoted by American culture in Weimar Germany, see Nolan, Visions of Modernity, 120-7; and Eve Rosenhaft, "Lesewut, Kinosucht, Radiotismus: Zur (geschlechter-)politischen Relevanz neuer Massenmedien in den 1920 er Jahren," in Lüdtke, Marßolek, von Saldern, eds., Amerikanisierung, 119-43.

42. See my essays "Benjamin and Cinema," and "America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity," in Charney and Schwartz, eds. Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life, 362-402.

43. J. G. Fichte, quoted in Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash, Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 175.

44. See Beck, Giddens, Lash, Reflexive Modernization; see also Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991). Lash, "Reflexive Modernization: The Aesthetic Dimension," Theory, Culture and Society 10, no. 1 (1993): 1-23, criticizes his coauthors for both the notion of a "high" or "simple" modernity and for their neglect of the "aesthetic dimension," but he does not develop the latter in terms of changes in the institution of art and

the new regimes of sensory perception emerging
with mass-mediated modernity.

45. This is not to say that the cinema was unique or original in forging a modern type of publicness. It was part of, and borrowed from, a whole array of institutions—department stores, world fairs, tourism, amusement parks, vaudeville, etc.--that involved new regimes of sensory perception and new forms of sociability. At the same time, the cinema represented, multiplied, and deterritorialized these new experiential regimes. My understanding of the public sphere as a general, social "horizon of experience" is indebted to Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, The Public Sphere and Experience (1972), trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Daniel, Assenka Oksiloff, intr. Miriam Hansen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

46. [Siegfried Kracauer], "Berliner Nebeneinander: Kara-Iki-- Scala-Ball im Savoy--Menschen im Hotel," Frankfurter Zeitung 17 February 1933, my translation; see also "Cult of Distraction" (1926) and other essays in: Kracauer, The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays, trans., ed., and intr. by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

47. [Siegfried Kracauer], "Artistisches und Amerikanisches," Frankfurter Zeitung, 29 January 1926, my translation.

48. See, for instance, Eileen Bowser, "Subverting the Conventions: Slapstick as Genre," in The Slapstick Symposium, ed. Bowser (Brussels: Féderation Internationale des Archives du Film, 1988) 13-17; Crafton, "Pie and Chase"; and Charles Musser, "Work, Ideology and Chaplin's Tramp," Radical History 41 (April 1988): 37-66.

49. Benjamin, "One-Way Street" (1928), trans. Edmund Jephcott, in Selected Writings, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 476 (translation modified).

50. Antonin Artaud, "The Shell and the Clergyman: Film Scenario," transition 29-30 (June 1930): 65, quoted in Siegfried Kracauer, Theory of Film (1960; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 189; Louis Aragon, "On Decor" (1918) in French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, 1907-1939, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 1:165. See also Colette, "Cinema: The Cheat"; Louis Delluc, "Beauty in the Cinema" (1917) and "From Orestes to Rio Jim" (1921);

Blaise Cendrars, "The Modern: A New Art, the Cinema" (1919); and Jean Epstein, "Magnification" (1921) in ibid. See also "Bonjour cinéma and Other Writings by Jean Epstein," trans. Tom Milne, Afterimage, 10 [n.d.], esp. 9-16; and Philippe Soupault, "Cinema U.S.A." (1924), in The Shadow and Its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on Cinema, ed. Paul Hammond (London: British Film Institute, 1978), 32-3.

51. Benjamin develops the notion of an "optical unconscious" in "A Short History of Photography" (1931), trans. Stanley Mitchell, Screen 13 (spring 1972): 7-8; and in his famous essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 235-

7. See also his defense of Battleship Potemkin, "A Discussion of Russian Filmic Art and Collectivist Art in General" (1927), in Kaes, Jay, Dimendberg, eds., Weimar Republic Sourcebook, 627.

http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/modernism-modernity/v006/6.2hansen.html